

AN INTERESTING SUMMER GATHERING...

The Hospice Society of Greater Halifax's summer social event was recently held on Saturday July 8, 2006. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon shared by a wonderful group of people supporting a great cause. The gathering was at the Brookhaven Bed & Breakfast in Fall River where owners of the Inn, Judy and Dobbie Neilson, very generously allowed us to hold the event.

Board member Carolyn Fougere thanked everyone for coming out to enjoy the day and for their generosity and dedication to the Hospice Society of Greater Halifax, in particular Valerie Spencer and Board Members Lely, Martin, Rick and Betty, who have spent countless hours working on the strategic plan and scouting out suitable real-estate properties. Without their "hard work and dedication, the Hospice Society of Greater Halifax would simply not exist".

Carolyn also spoke about her own experiences with Hospice at the Prince George Rotary Hospice in British Columbia, where her late husband, Scott, was admitted in February of 2005. She shared how Scott was able to spend his final days with friends and family, including their 3 year old daughter Jillian. Staff of the Hospice ensured Scott's medical needs were met and that he was made as comfortable as possible. The Hospice staff also counseled Carolyn and her family on what to expect over the days spent in the home-like setting. She described the experience with the Hospice and its staff as an "otherwise unbearable situation made more peaceful and uncomplicated, allowing the patient to spend time with friends and family".

Judy Neilson took members of the Society on tours of the Bed and Breakfast. The property is a 5 bedroom ranch style house with a large country kitchen overlooking the

beautifully landscaped wooded lot and pond. It is considered by the Board to be a nearly ideal model of a freestanding residential Hospice in accordance with the strategic plan. For anyone who may have had trouble visualizing what a residential hospice might look like, it became very clear as you walked from room to room. With its wheelchair ramp, wide doorways, bright spacious kitchen, relaxing common room and comfortable sunlit bedrooms it is a place you immediately feel at-home in. The grounds are beautifully landscaped with several outdoor areas for sitting, including an area by the garden lily pond. There is also a short walking trail into the woods by the brook that runs along the edge of the property.

The gathering was attended by approximately 30 members including a few new members to the Hospice Society.

MICHELLE PINFOLD

LOTS OF MEDIA COVERAGE FOR BIKE FOR LIFE...

With the arrival of Mike Conway and Conrad Nickels to our fair city as a stop on their cross country bike ride, the Society basked in their glory and became a Star for The Day. Many of our members were seen on Live at 5 or CBC News welcoming the boys; Breakfast Television the next day showed the news clip again. The media coverage featured interviews with our board members Lely and Carolyn who both did an excellent job of spreading our message.



As well there was an article in the Chronicle Herald which again featured our story. We had a good turnout of members and friends to welcome the boys on their arrival in downtown Halifax: thanks to everyone who came out. Mike

and Conrad loved Halifax, and after the official part of the day was over they spent the evening taking in the sights and testing some of the local liquid refreshment. They both said they would love to come back sometime for a visit,

especially for the grand opening of Hospice Halifax (whenever) and they thanked the Society for their warm welcome.

BETTY MORTON

A STUDY OF DIGNITY THERAPY...

The following article is from an educational newsletter distributed by Hospice of Waterloo Region.

'Dignity Therapy' Reduces Suffering and Distress by Engendering Hopefulness"

A Canadian-Australian research team suggests a novel non-pharmacological intervention

Research suggests that psychosocial and existential issues are of major concern to terminally ill patients, causing perhaps even greater distress than pain and physical symptoms. A new psychotherapeutic intervention, dignity therapy, reduces suffering and distress by engendering hopefulness — a sense of meaning and purpose — in patients living life at the end of life.

That is according to Harvey Max Chochinov, MD, PhD, and colleagues, who conducted a feasibility study of the novel therapy. Their findings appeared in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

"The beneficial effects of dignity therapy reside in being able to bolster a sense of meaning and purpose while reinforcing a continued sense of worth within a framework that is supportive, nurturing, and accessible, even for those proxi-

mate to death," write the authors. Participants in the trial were 100 terminally ill cancer patients (life expectancy, 6 months; mean age, 63.9 years) receiving palliative care services in Winnipeg and Perth, Australia, from 2001 to 2003. Patients were asked to complete pre and post-intervention measures of a broad range of outcomes, and to commit to two 30 to 60 minute therapeutic sessions.

In the first session, patients were invited by a trained therapist to discuss aspects of their lives that mattered most to them, or that they would most want remembered. Their responses were taped, transcribed and read back to them in the second session. The resultant edited transcript was then presented to the patient to bequeath to a family member or friend.

Post-intervention measures of suffering showed significant improvement, as did self-reports of depressed mood. There are very few non-pharmacological interventions designed to lessen suffering at the end of life, the authors note. Strategies are often invoked that "offer the equivalent of emotional analgesia without necessarily addressing the source or cause of the underlying psychic pain."

The authors conclude "evidence from this trial speaks to the im-

portance of using every clinical encounter as an opportunity to acknowledge, reinforce, and, where possible, reaffirm the personhood of patients charged to a clinician's care."

Source: "Dignity Therapy: A Novel Psychotherapeutic Intervention for Patients Near the End of Life," *Journal of Clinical Oncology*; August 20, 2005 23(24):5520-5525, Chochinov HM, Hack T, Hassard T, Kristjanson LJ, McClement S, Harlos M; Department of Psychiatry, Family Medicine, Community Health Sciences, and Faculty of Nursing, University of Manitoba; St. Boniface General Hospital, Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia

FEASIBILITY STUDY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

91% reported feeling satisfied with dignity therapy; 86% reported that the intervention was helpful;

81% said that it had been or would be of help to their family; 76% indicated that the therapy had heightened their sense of dignity; 68% reported an increased sense of purpose; 47% said the intervention had increased their will to live.

THE WORKING GROUPS CONTINUE TO MAKE PROGRESS...

Communications

Although the communications team has not been able to meet over the summer months, it is still working diligently and making progress in a number of ways. First, the media coverage we were able to get for the Society and the Bike for Life was phenomenal: coverage on two TV channels and in a major newspaper helped our public image considerably, and also made some important media connections. This was thanks, in good part, to our new team member June Bourque.

With internal communications going fairly well, we will now be concentrating on external communications. Particular focus is on updating our website (in progress) to reflect our new look and with much more information, as well as re-writing our brochure. If anyone with writing skills would like to help with these tasks, or research information, please contact Betty at 465-2058.

BETTY MORTON

Chair of Communications Working Group

Education

The Education Working Group is very pleased to introduce its newest member: Angela McFadden. Angela has already proven to be an invaluable addition to the group and we're all looking forward to working with her on many future projects.

The Education Group has been working consistently, even during the summer, to achieve the goals

set for the year. Angela, Brenda, Martin and Lely have been focusing on two fronts at this point: Grieving Circle and Community Educational Program on Death and Dying.

As the Grieving Circle moves into its new phase, the Education Working Group contacted all the facilitators of the GC to confirm their commitment to the Circle and their willingness to either participate as part of a planning committee for the new revamped GC, or to continue as a facilitator when the new format is rolled out. When this group inherited the GC we noticed that many facilitators were not members of the Hospice Society. Nevertheless, we can already report a positive result from these contacts: several facilitators that were disconnected from the Hospice Society manifested interest in rejoining the Society as members. The Education Working Group will ensure that all facilitators, from now on, will be members of the Society. A meeting with the facilitators who will be part of the planning committee is scheduled for Sept 13th. We'll keep you posted on that.

As for the community educational program on Death and Dying, the group is developing a 4-week curriculum that will be offered to community groups. The main goal of this program, tentatively called "Facing your own death", is to increase awareness of one's own mortality as a way to add meaning and purpose to life, as well as to introduce the concept of residential hospices. The Education Working Group is looking forward to the

start of the course this fall. Also, this project will fulfill one of the missions of the Hospice Society which is to increase awareness on issues related to death and dying.

ANGELA McFADDEN

BRENDA COISH-GINN

LELY ABUD

MARTIN LAJOIE

Education Working Group members

Fundraising

We would like to thank everyone who bought and/or sold Autumn corms; these lovely flowers will add a welcome splash of colour to the fall garden in late September this year, and for many years to come.

World Hospice and Palliative Care Day is on October 7, and this committee is working on a small event to celebrate the day; we'll keep you informed.

The next major fundraising event will be the Angel Tree during which time we invite members of the public to buy an angel in memory of a loved one and place it on a Christmas tree. These trees will be found at various locations in Dartmouth, Halifax and Bedford. We'll be looking for volunteers for this event; if you would like to participate during the festive season, please contact anyone in the fundraising group.

CAROLYN FOUGERE

Chair of Fundraising Working Group

A GENEROUS DONATION...

Imperial Oil, through its Volunteer Involvement Program, generously donated one thousand dollars to the Hospice Society. This is the second time in recent years that Imperial Oil has supported the Hospice Society through a grant, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank Imperial Oil and Martin Lajoie for making this important contribution possible.

The Hospice Society would also like to encourage all members to investigate the availability of such grants with their employers. Many companies have funding available for charitable organizations such as ours and are pleased to encourage their employees to become volunteers.

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR...

Due to personal matters, Claire Henry has been obliged to resign as Membership Coordinator. Your contribution to the Society in this capacity was greatly appreciated, Claire.

We are now seeking a person to become the new Membership Coordinator. The duties will include welcoming new members, membership renewal, recruiting volunteer-members to support the activities of the Working Groups and maintaining a data-base of members. The Coordinator will work closely with the Secretary of the Board of Directors and the Chairs of the Working Groups. To volunteer for this interesting position, please contact Betty Morton [465-2058 betty.morton@ns.sympatico.ca].

Editor's Note -

The World Hospice and Palliative Care Day last year saw over 1,100 events taking place in 74 countries; it was held in partnership with Voices for Hospices, the global music marathon which had over 500 concerts around the world and raised much needed funds for local hospice services. The next Voices for Hospices event will take place with World Hospice and Palliative Care Day on October 6th, 2007 [www.voicesforhospices.org]. The planning for these events involves time and many people, so the more members we are able to recruit, the more volunteers we'll have. The benefits from participating could be enormous and we have a year in which to prepare. Are we up to the challenge? I hope the answer is an emphatic "YES".

As we predicted, at the summer gathering Betty Morton was awarded a fabulous prize for naming the newsletter "Hospice Happenings". Kathleen McKinnon praised Betty's originality while presenting her with a bouquet of flowers and a diploma promising that she "will receive a free copy of the publication in perpetuity". Congrats, Betty!

If you have anything of interest to other society members - a story, a joke, an experience to be shared - don't hesitate to get in touch with us. We'll be pleased to hear from you.

JAN EVANS Editor

CONGRATULATIONS IN ORDER...

Many organizations and groups are working towards acquiring free-standing hospice residences for Atlantic Canada; it appears this goal is getting closer all the time.

After years of supporting dying people and their families at home, Hospice of Greater Saint John, N.B. recently purchased "Hospice House" at 282, Douglas Avenue in Saint John. The plan is to start with a day hospice program in the fall, and also to lobby the N.B. Government for funding for a full residential hospice program. Congratulations to all the good folks at Hospice of Greater Saint John.

The "Hospice Happenings" team:

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 PLEASE WELCOME
THESE NEW MEMBERS
*Paulette Edwards; Sass Minard
Lori Morton; Karen Nieuwland*

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"When you can no longer add days to your life, add life to your days."